

Testimony for Public Hearing

Appropriations Committee

February 20, 2009

Dr. Karen Kangas

12 Riverbend Lane

Canton, CT 06019

Good evening members of the appropriations committee. This happens to be my 25th appearance before this committee in the last 25 years, the reason for my persistence is that I am a now A SENIOR CITIZEN, but I still am living (living being the key word), with a serious mental illness. I thought the aging process would reduce the need for psychiatric services however for me despite spending at least 70% of the year in recovery I still spend the remainder of the year in great pain and instability from bipolar illness, this time has also meant more hospitalizations. I thought the days of seeing abuse, restraint, seclusion, heavy sedation would be over. I am happy to say however that it has certainly has been reduced due to the emphasis on recovery, tremendous leadership, particularly Dr. Thomas Kirk, and money that has been appropriated for the right supports--for me in particular has been employment.

As a former DMHAS employee I have spent time at both Cedarcrest and CVH (Connecticut Valley Hospital) campuses. If I were to be hospitalized at either facility I think my choice would be CVH, let me list the reasons for this choice. CVH offers a campus that hosts many recovery sites, for example the greenhouse, computer lab, the new library, a beautiful boutique (shopping being a favorite pastime of mine), The Recovery Café, swimming pool, etc. Hopefully if we can eliminate the level systems that are currently in place in both CVH and Cedarcrest my time at CVH could be short, pleasurable, meaningful and filled with hope. CVH has had much positive attention because of DOJ and other governing bodies to ensure that staff, administrators and clients are well aware that recovery is not only the word of the day but the word of tomorrow and the future. Change is possible and perhaps it would be faster if we were to concentrate our efforts on a major hospital facility, i.e. a recovery university campus.

Together we need to eliminate discrimination and give people back their lives. Enhancing programs providing housing, treating people with respect and dignity, Connecticut will become the leader in doing it in spite of difficult economic times, good luck to all of us.